

which he does not already know, but it is hoped that he will find them an accurate and useful summary. The value of such a work rests not on fresh research in specialized fields[^] but on the summary and interpretation of results available in detailed but unconnected studies. For the general reader or for the foreign resident or traveller in China who desires a more than fleeting view of the country the work may prove of value.

To those to whom the volumes are their first introduction to China, much of the text may seem to be overloaded and confused with strange names. The effort has been made, however, to reduce these to the minimum which all who seek to be familiar with the main features of the history and culture of the Chinese must know. The expert, indeed, may feel that too many names have been omitted.

No one can be more conscious than is the author of the inevitable defects of such a work. It must be brief. Many fields which it attempts to cover lack the necessary spade-work of specialized monographs and later researches will invalidate or modify the conclusions reached. Even at its best it cannot hope to be standard for many decades. New studies, both by Chinese and by Occidentals, will quickly make great portions of it obsolete. Such advance in our knowledge, indeed, is not only to be welcomed but encouraged. China, too, is moving so rapidly that those sections of the book which attempt to portray and interpret contemporary conditions and movements will soon be out of date. Even measured by our present knowledge some mistakes will almost inevitably creep in. It is hoped, however, that the following pages have succeeded in achieving a fairly well-balanced summary of what is now familiar to experts, and that they will aid in

encouraging further investigation in many of the fields covered.

More and more Chinese are interpreting their country to the West—a movement to be greeted most warmly. There must always remain, however, as for every nation, need for the sort of appraisal which the foreigner, with his different and often more detached perspective, can give.

It is, of course, too much to hope that these volumes will take as prominent a place as that once held by *The Middle Kingdom*.

It may not be unduly presumptuous, however, to dedicate them to the memory of Frederick Wells Williams, tie distinguished